



STANFORD UNIVERSITY MEDICAL CENTER

STANFORD, CALIFORNIA 94305

June 30, 1975

STANFORD UNIVERSITY SCHOOL OF MEDICINE
Department of Genetics
415, 497-3052

Dr. Edward L. Tatum
The Rockefeller University
New York, New York 10021

Dear Ed,

Your letter dated June 3rd and received here on June 19th was on my desk when I returned this morning from a trip. If I tell you that my business was with the World Health Organization in Geneva, you will see that I certainly have no excuse along the lines of pretension to non-expertise not to respond to the enclosed appeal for a statement about the world situation.

My only concern is whether I will be able to find the time to draft one of the quality that is merited by the occasion. Certainly, if I can manage it I certainly will do so. If not, I may be able to find or a few short pieces that are perhaps still timely instead.

My chief concern about statements of this kind is that by concentrating on the ideal, they may distract attention from the necessary pragmatic mechanisms that are needed to move from here to there. Certainly, the conditions on this earth would be far more amenable to solution if we had but a single, hopefully democratic world government. But to confuse the ideal with the actual would only expose us to the most frightful exploitation by those who actually do have the power! And I wonder what a lot of good our talking about an equitable global economic system is going to do when it comes to the price of oil!

However, this is not a criticism, just a note of some personal discouragement and not one to deter trying to do the best we can.

Sincerely yours,

Joshua Lederberg
Professor of Genetics

JL/rr

cc: Mr. Carl M. Shy, Director, Institute for Environmental Studies

LT. J. P. KENNEDY, JR. LABORATORIES FOR MOLECULAR MEDICINE, DEDICATED TO RESEARCH IN MENTAL RETARDATION

MOLECULAR BIOLOGY

HEREDITY

NEUROBIOLOGY

DEVELOPMENTAL MEDICINE